

Department of Planning and Zoning

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TO: Design Advisory Board
FROM: Scott Gustin
DATE: June 23, 2015
RE: 15-1314CA, 495-497 Colchester Avenue

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Zone: NMU Ward: 1E
Owner/Representative: Brisson Properties / Jay White

Request: Raise building in place, insert additional story, and remove front porch. Retain 4 dwelling units and establish cafe.

OVERVIEW:

The applicant is seeking approval to renovate and expand an existing 4-unit apartment building. The original ground level story was largely buried following installation of an elevated bridge across the Winooski River following the 1927 flood. This proposal includes elevating the buried first story (and upper stories) and inserting a new first story in its place. The footprint of the building, including the basement, will remain unchanged. The four residential apartments will be retained and renovated, and a café will be established in the newly inserted ground floor level.

This proposal underwent sketch plan review with the Development Review Board on February 17, 2015. Much of the site work associated with that sketch plan has been eliminated from the current proposal largely due to its encroachment into the public right-of-way. The proposed building work remains largely the same. Staff had raised concerns with the significant alterations to the historic structure and loss of the physical documentation (burial) associated with one of Vermont's most significant natural disasters. The Development Review Board, however, felt that the proposed work was acceptable, particularly in light of the deteriorating condition of the buried portions of the structure. They encouraged documentation of the building in its present condition prior to making alterations. Other concerns relative to proposed work within the street right-of-way are no longer pertinent, as that work has been eliminated.

ARTICLE 6: DEVELOPMENT REVIEW STANDARDS

Part 1, Land Division Design Standards

Not applicable.

Part 2, Site Plan Design Standards

Sec. 6.2.2, Review Standards

Limited site work is included in this proposal. Existing window wells along the north elevation will be removed. New concrete steps from the public sidewalk along Colchester Avenue will be installed, providing a connection to the rebuilt walkway along the building's southern elevation. This rebuilt walkway will be installed following limited excavation to moderately lower the grade.

The covered porch on the building's eastern elevation will be removed, and the walkway will be retained.

Part 3, Architectural Design Standards

Sec. 6.3.2, Review Standards

(a) Relate development to its environment

1. Massing, Height, and Scale

While the building will become larger with the insertion of a new floor level, its general massing will remain essentially the same. The symmetric rectangular shape will be retained along with the gable roof and evenly proportioned fenestration. Building height, too, will obviously increase. The greater building mass and height, however, remain within a scale consistent with the nearby mix of commercial and residential buildings.

While not a criterion under the Design Advisory Board's purview, it bears noting that the increased building volume may result in additional required off-street parking per Sec. 8.1.7, *Non-conforming Residential Structure*. For every new (i.e. additional) room added, 1 off-street parking space is needed until conformity is achieved. In this case, there is presently just 1 off-street parking space (although it is not noted on the site plan), and 4 are required. Given the limitations of the site, it appears that, at most, 2 off-street parking spaces could be provided.

2. Roofs and Rooflines

As noted above, the pitched gable roof will be retained in its present condition.

3. Building Openings

Generally, existing doors and windows will be retained. Former window and door openings that have been bricked in and buried will be re-opened and fit with new windows and doors within the rough openings. Several unoriginal doors and windows will be removed and filled in with siding material. The proposed window and door alterations/additions reflect the building's established fenestration pattern.

(b) Protection of important architectural resources

See Sec. 5.4.8.

(c) Protection of important public views

The building is not located along any defined view corridor. The proposed renovations and addition will not impact any important public views.

(d) Provide an active and inviting street edge

The proposed construction will liven the structure's Colchester Avenue frontage, reintroducing shopfront windows and doors that were buried following the 1927 flood. Note that the west elevation plans contain a labeling error, referring to buried windows versus doors on the existing versus proposed building elevation plans. The newly reintroduced doors on the west elevation are somewhat elevated above grade. Presumably, steps will be provided as the doors appear to be functional, but none are evident on the site or elevation plans. If so, an encumbrance permit from the Dept. of Public Works will likely be needed for encroachment into the street right-of-way.

(e) Quality of materials

Existing brick veneer will be retained and filled in as needed. The newly inserted ground floor will be constructed of concrete, clad in stone veneer. New lintel materials are not noted and must be. Likewise, window materials are not noted and must be.

(f) Reduce energy utilization

No exceptional measures for reducing energy consumption are noted in the project plans.

(g) Make advertising features complimentary to the site

No outdoor signage is included in this proposal.

(h) Integrate infrastructure into the building design

The utility meter cluster will be relocated to the building's south elevation. They will be largely hidden from view in this location. Similarly, new heat pumps will be located along the southern elevation.

(i) Make spaces safe and secure

Doorways will be illuminated with exterior light fixtures. New windows must be sized appropriately for compliance with current egress requirements.

ARTICLE 5: CITYWIDE GENERAL STANDARDS

Sec. 5.4.8 Historic Buildings and Sites

The City seeks to preserve, maintain, and enhance those aspects of the city having historical, architectural, archaeological, and cultural merit. Specifically, these regulations seek to achieve the following goals:

To preserve, maintain and enhance Burlington's historic character, scale, architectural integrity, and cultural resources;

To foster the preservation of Burlington's historic and cultural resources as part of an attractive, vibrant, and livable community in which to live, work and visit;

To promote a sense of community based on understanding the city's historic growth and development, and maintaining the city's sense of place by protecting its historic and cultural resources; and,

To promote the adaptive re-use of historic buildings and sites.

(a) Applicability:

These regulations shall apply to all buildings and sites in the city that are listed, or eligible for listing, on the State or National Register of Historic Places.

The subject building is included in the National Register of Historic Places and the VT Historic Sites & Structures Survey. It is located within the Winooski Falls Mill Historic District and was constructed prior to 1822. As such, it is one of the oldest industrial structures in Burlington.

(b) Standards and Guidelines:

The following development standards, following the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties, shall be used in the review of all applications involving historic buildings and sites subject to the provisions of this section and the requirements for Design Review in Art 3, Part 4. The Secretary of the Interior's Standards are basic principles created to help

preserve the distinctive character of a historic building and its site. They are a series of concepts about maintaining, repairing and replacing historic features, as well as designing new additions or making alterations. These Standards are intended to be applied in a reasonable manner, taking into consideration economic and technical feasibility.

1. *A property will be used as it was historically or be given a new use that requires minimal change to its distinctive materials, features, spaces, and spatial relationships.*

For most of its history, the building was used for commercial purposes. More recently, the building has been used for residential apartments. The apartment use will be retained, and a new café space will be established. Materials and features will remain largely unchanged except for the introduction of concrete with stone veneer along the new ground level and the reintroduction of several windows and doors into bricked-in openings. Although the overall building mass will increase, the spatial relationship amongst building features will remain consistent.

2. *The historic character of a property will be retained and preserved. The removal of distinctive materials or alteration of features, spaces, and spatial relationships that characterize a property will be avoided.*

Exterior building materials will remain intact and be repaired as needed. As noted above, several bricked-in window and door openings will be opened up again with new windows and doors. The newly inserted ground level will, of course, contain additional fenestration. Contiguity amongst the spatial relationships of building features will be retained.

3. *Each property will be recognized as a physical record of its time, place, and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectural features or elements from other historic properties, will not be undertaken.*

Within the original structure, no conjectural features or elements will be added. New windows and doors will be inserted into original openings that were bricked-in when the building was partially buried. The newly inserted ground level will be clad in stone veneer and will be distinct from the original structure to be set upon it. The proposed work is another clearly discernable chapter in the history of this structure.

4. *Changes to a property that have acquired historic significance in their own right will be retained and preserved.*

The partial burial of the building following the 1927 flood is historically significant in its own right. While most of the original structure will be raised out of the ground, the surrounding grades and building volume within the ground will remain unchanged. Deteriorating buried brick will be raised out of the ground and replaced with concrete for the new ground floor.

5. *Distinctive materials, features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property will be preserved.*

It appears that all such materials, features, finishes, and construction techniques represented by the original structure will be preserved. As noted previously, window and lintel material information is needed.

6. *Deteriorated historic features will be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature will match the old in design, color, texture, and, where possible, materials recognizing that new technologies may provide an appropriate alternative in order to adapt to ever changing conditions and provide for an efficient contemporary use. Replacement of missing features will be substantiated by documentary and physical evidence.*

When the original structure is raised, damaged brick will be repaired as needed. Previously bricked-in (and buried) window and door openings will be reopened with new windows and doors.

7. *Chemical or physical treatments, if appropriate, will be undertaken using the gentlest means possible. Treatments that cause damage to historic materials will not be used.*

No such treatments are included in this proposal.

8. *Archeological resources will be protected and preserved in place. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures will be undertaken.*

The property contains no known archaeological resources, and only limited excavation is proposed.

9. *New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction will not destroy historic materials, features, and spatial relationships that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and will be compatible with the historic materials, features, size, scale, and proportion, and massing to protect the integrity of the property and its environment.*

The new addition in this proposal amounts to a new ground level floor. The original structure (sans the basement) will be lifted and placed on top of a newly constructed ground floor. The existing exterior building materials and features will be retained. The new construction will be constructed of concrete and clad in stone veneer. It will be clearly distinct from the original structure to be placed upon it. The new ground floor is compatible with the rest of the structure in terms of its size, scale, and proportion. As noted previously, spatial relationships amongst building features will remain consistent. Although the building will become larger, its overall massing and fenestration pattern will be retained.

10. *New additions and adjacent or related new construction will be undertaken in such a manner that, if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.*

While the proposed construction could technically be removed in the future, it is essentially a permanent alteration. Insofar as the historic structure will be retained and placed upon the new ground floor, its removal would simply amount to re-burying much of the original structure.

RECOMMENDED MOTION:

Approval and forward to the Development Review Board with the following conditions:

1. Correct the labeling error on the west elevation plans (bricked-in doors vs. windows).
2. Note window and lintel materials.
3. Clarify whether a step or steps will accompany the re-installed doors on the west elevation.
4. Indicate the net new number of rooms constructed and associated off-street parking.